Vol. I. Numb. 17.

Athenian News:

OR,

Dunton's Oracle.

From **Saturday** *April* the 29th, to **Tuesday** *May* the 2d, 1710.

The Bed-Poſt, *with a Character of the Upholſterer's Company; alſo an Explanation of that Proverb,* I'll be about you in the Twinkling of a Bed-ſtaff.

READER,

I Receiv'd the following Letter and *Poſt*, from a Gentleman of eminent Parts and great Generoſity. I call him ſo, as he's pleas'd to tell me, *The Satisfaction of pleaſing a Friend is Reward enough, and what ſhall abundantly recompenſe his Labour, if he now and then preſents me with a diverting Poſt.*— Wou'd my other Queriſts follow this generous Example, my Three Thouſand Poſts wou'd be finiſh'd with much Eaſe, and ſufficiently reward me for my taking upon me the labouring Oar: However, I had not been ſo vain as to have inſerted this Gentleman's undeſerv'd Complements upon *Dunton's Oracle*, (for I approve more of letting my Performance ſpeak for it ſelf, than of praiſing what don't deſerve it) had he not told me I muſt publiſh both Letter and *Poſt* juſt as he ſent it to me, or muſt not expect any further Aſſiſtance of that Kind; and therefore, rather than loſe the Friendſhip of ſuch an ingenious Gentleman, I have inſerted his Letter and *Bed-Poſt* juſt as 'twas ſent to me, that the World might ſee (in a laviſh Panegyrick) how far a nice and curious Judgment may be blinded by Friendſhip and Generoſity; and the Letter was thus directed.

To Mr. JOHN DUNTON, *Author of the* Athenian-Poſt.

SIR,

HAving had the good Fortune to meet with your Athenian-Poſt, *I could not in Point of Gratitude, do leſs than teſtify my Approbation by Letter: A glorious Deſign indeed, to aſſert the Liberties of a* Britiſh *Subject, and deliver us from that Deluge of Ignorance which has over-run us! 'Tis from this promiſing Dawn we expect to date our Æra's of Learning and Ingenuity; 'tis this alone, if promoted with the Author's Conſent, as much as the World's, will ſhew how far a* True-born Athenian *can out-do a* Britiſh Tatler; (*not that I would decry any one's Merits*) *but the greateſt Monarchies, as well as inferior Things, have had their Temporary Dates.* Rome *was, we ſay, and that Cenſor flouriſh'd once, but now he only affords Subjects for other's Cenſures, and makes every one aſſume that Name which he formerly thought his greateſt Glory: But you, Sir, are* ſpes altera. *However, tho' your Wit be inexhauſtible, yet the Current may not always be ſo ſtrong as now, or your Buſineſs may divert you; ſo that if you will accept this* Poſt *enclos'd, as kindly as 'tis humbly offer'd you will oblige*

Your unknown Friend and Servant, &c.

The BED-POST.

——————— *Nobis*
Sponda videtur Atlas.—— Manil.

SInce *Bick——f* the Cenſor has preſented the World with a learned Account of the Family of the *Staffs*, and *Bick——f* the Prophet oblig'd Mankind with Meditations on a *Broomſtick*, I hope a Diſſertation upon a *Bed-Poſt* cannot be unacceptable to all Admirers of the *Belles Lettres.* The Thing at firſt may ſeem below the Lucubration (for ſuch I muſt call it, and perhaps it may better deſerve the Name than ſeveral other Subjects out of the Relation that is between them both) of a wiſe Man; but I doubt not that, if rightly conſider'd, it will bear the Weight of a Sophiſter's Argument, as well as it does of his Body. 'Tis of an ancient Pedigree, tho' for ſome Hundreds of Years from the Creation Men were wholly ignorant of any Bed but that of Honour, and conſequently any Bed-ſtead but Valour, ſince that ſupported Honour as a Bed-ſtead does a Bed. *Og*, the Giant of *Baſhan*, was the firſt we meet with that was famous for his *Bed-Poſt*, and it is deſervedly recorded, that his Invention may be as diſtinguiſhable as his Stature.

Procinſtes's Bed was next; and he, in Imitation of his Father, (who was a Taylor, and us'd to cut his

Coat ſuitable to his Cloth) made every's Proportion ſuitable to his Bed, and by cutting ſo many Legs ſpoil'd many a future Taylor.

The Bed of *Ware* with its Poſts, and all Appurtenances, are a Copy of the firſt, *viz.* *Og*'s Bed, and perhaps is frequented by as many horn'd Beaſts as ever *Baſhan* bred. It was always us'd by the *Romans* both by Night or Day, at all Meals it was a Partaker of the Entertainment, as well as Part of it, and if the Maſter of the Feaſt was a —— it was to be ſure the moſt welcome Gueſt there, and amongſt us it is our Nightly Familiar.

Have you beheld in a fair Summer's Ev'n,
The golden headed Charioteer of Heaven?
With what a Speed his prouder Reins do bend
His panting Horſes to their Journey's End?
How red he looks, with what a ſwift Career
He hurries to the lower Hemiſphere,
And in a Moment ſhoots his bluſhing Head
Upon the Pillow of fair Thetis *Bed?*
Ev'n ſo the Bridegroom, whoſe Deſires have Wings
More ſwift than Time, ſwitch'd on with Pleaſure ſprings
Into his Nuptial Bed, and there he clings.

The Bed is *India*, where fair *Celia* lies, a Pearl, where ſhe ſleeps like Innocence her ſelf in White, and when the Curtains are clos'd, 'tis as if Darkneſs did command that ſuch a Jewel ſhould be hid. Then certainly he ſhew'd himſelf but an indifferent, or rather ignorant Huſband, who being in Bed with his Wife call'd for his Book, which his Wife obſerving, call'd likewiſe for her Wheel. Why what do you mean ſaid he? To fall to my Work, as you do to your Book; and may you ſpeed as I ſpin. Mean Time, I have ſpun a fair Thread to become his Bride, who makes his Study of his Bed. But if you had made right Uſe of all the Problems you have read, you might have found that a Study was a Place for you to conceive in, but a Bed for me. I could wiſh you, Huſband, to turn over a new Leaf.

Reader, ſhould the Bed diſcover all it knows, how many would it put to the Bluſh? But like a Boſom Friend it bears all Things, and induſtriouſly avoids the diſtinguiſhing Quality of a *Tatler*. It is the Seat and Kingdom of Indolence and Repoſe, and if you can't meet with it eaſily, 'tis but a Confuſion of the *Mater piæ*, according to Mr. *Blount* of notorious Memory, and you may poſſibly go to Heaven, tho' all, learned and unlearned, Ancients and Modern, agree, that there is no Paſſage thither from a Feather-bed; but I will only bring one more Argument to prove its Worth, and that is the Multitude of thoſe who are true Friends to it, and Admirers of its Society, with innumerable Beaus and Belles which are ſo enamour'd with it that one would think it deſerv'd an Ode as well as their Miſtreſs, and who can't prevail with themſelves to leave it, 'till the indiſpenſible Neceſſity of riſing by Twelve, to be ready dreſs'd by Four, obliges them to it: So powerful is Neceſſity over Human Affections, and tho' it has no Law, it enforces it ſelf inſtead of one. But ſince I began this Subject I receiv'd this Letter, in which there are ſome Objections againſt the Uſefulneſs of *Bed-Poſts* in a Commonwealth. For my Part, I think them invalid, by Reaſon of the Prejudice of the Complainant.

SIR,

I Think I am oblig'd to bear my Teſtimony againſt that heathenish and helliſh Invention of Bed-Poſts; *nor do I ſpeak without Reaſon for my Aſſertions, for my Wife has often, to my Pain and Grief, ty'd me to thoſe Deviliſh Machines, and beat me 'till both were weary. Her uſual Phraſe is,* P—x take you, I'll be about you in the Twinkling of a Bed-Poſt, *an Expreſſion I don't well know how to explain, tho' I have ſo oft experienc'd it. Having theſe juſt Occaſions of Grief, Sir, I beg you to let alone your Panegyrick upon that* Poſt, *and wiſh that Phraſe may be aboliſh'd, or at leaſt from my Wife's Mouth, and your Petitioner ſhall ever pray.*

Anthony Sneak

The Caſe of this Henpeck'd Gentleman I muſt confeſs is very diſaſterous, and 'twere to be wiſh'd that the *Salick* Law in private Families were in Force here. I am apt to think this Story would prove a noble Subject for Tragedy. We *Britains* are remarkable for loving of Cruelty in our Drama's, and what can be more terrible than to ſee a Woman not content that her Huſband is ty'd to her Bed by Marriage, but ſhe muſt tie him to her *Bed-Poſt* by one of the Comforts too of Marriage, like *Prometheus* to a Rock, and her ſelf be the Vultur that preys on his Fleſh? What can be more moving, than to ſee the Reverſe of the *Roniſh* Cuſtoms, and the Wife performing the Jeſuit's Office in the double Capacity of Confeſſor and Executioner? But I ſhall leave this Conſideration to the new Modellers of our Stages and Plays and paſs to that Proverb which Mr. *Sneak* is at a Loſs to explain; *viz.* *The Twinkling of a Bed-Poſt, or Bed-Staff* (for I find by ancient Records, that they are the ſame in Effect, tho' this Age, which is full of Diviſions, would create a Miſunderſtanding between them). Upon this Account I ſhall beg Leave to relate this Story.

An Aſtronomer and his Wife had liv'd together ſo long, that they outgrew their Love to one another; the former was perfectly skill'd in every one's Fortune but his own, and knew every Planet's Houſe, nay, even Furniture too, as well as his own Garret; the latter had ſtudy'd the Motions of the Tongue with as long Experience and far better Succeſs, than her Husband the Stars. The Aſtronomer one ſtormy Night, after having long obſerv'd the Phaſes of the Planets, had ſo weaken'd his Eyes, that at going to Bed every Object had a fanſy Motion, and the Twinkling of his Eyes ſeem'd to be communicated, or rather reflected on the Bed-Poſt. *The Strangeneſs of the Accident made him not credit his own Eyes, but being judiciouſly levels his Teleſcope at it, and hitting right, he found his Opinion was juſtly grounded. I divine ſomething ſtrange my Dear, ſays he, Nature muſt certainly be blind when the* Bed-Poſt *twinkles. Hey Day, anſwers the Dame in a Paſſion, I believe I can ſee as far into a Mill-ſtone as you, and hope into a* Bed-Poſt: *Methinks you ought to have held your Peace, and let me talk who have all the Wit. The Husband examines it again and again, and after Half an Hour's Conference with himſelf, and a ſhort Prayer for enlightning his Mind, reſolves the Matter thus. Wife, ſays he,* Mars *and* Jupiter *are predominant to Night, and very naturally influence the* Bed-Poſt; *for I remember ſomewhere that* Jupiter *inſinuenc'd* Danae *thro' the Houſe-top, and my Apartment being free from Braſs or Iron, (which her Tower was made of) that*

han't ſo much as a Horſhoe on my Threſhold, the ſame Cauſe may probably produce the ſame Effects. The Wife heard him with much more Patience than Job's; *but in fine, ſhe thought her Husband had too much Learning, and her Husband knew her to have too little. At laſt all Arguments were laid aſide but that infallible one of a drubbing, and the* Bed-Poſt *which occaſion'd the Quarrel was made Uſe of to end it, and play'd the Part of the moſt eloquent Orator, both in raiſing the Paſſions and laying of them. Without the Help of Glaſſes the old Man found out his Wife, which was a Planet he always obſerv'd to bear an ill Aſpect. She curſs'd her Stars, and he reveng'd every Star with a ſevere Reprimand over the Shoulders, ſo that the Blows at laſt equall'd the Number of the Stars, and ſhe had no more left to exclaim againſt.*

This I take to be the Invention of that Proverb. How juſt ſoever it be I know not, but I may venture to ſay this, that the whole Story will afford ſome Satisfaction to the Complainant, and perhaps teach him this uſeful Remark, *that the ſame Thing has different Effects, and what is one Man's Food may be another Man's Poiſon.*

If I have not already cited Witneſſes enough, there is one Example which will clear all, I mean the Upholſterers Company, a Society as far beyond the ſo much talk'd of Upholders, as a Bed of Repoſe excells a Bed of State, or the Solemnity of Marriage, the melancholy Pomp of a Funeral. But here, by the Way, *Notum ſit omnibus & ſingulis, vel uni fœminæ,* (for

Tell them, and in Effect you tell the Town)

that I have made no Under-hand Bargain with the Upholſterers, nor taken Bribes for this Encomium. After all Prejudice invincible, and I can't help it if all theſe Authorities can't convince Men who have an unconquerable Averſion to them, either for Mr. *Sneak*'s Reaſon above-mention'd, or becauſe they had ſuch tedious Curtain Lectures that they abominate any thing belonging to a *Bed*, unleſs as it is the Emblem of the Grave, where they long to ſee their obſtreperous Spouſes quietly interr'd, who heartily applaud the Poet's Opinion,

Fœmina dulce malum horis opportuna duabus,
Cum jacet in thalamo, cum jacet in tumulo.
There are but Two good Hours which Women have,
One in the Bed, the other in the Grave:
Give me a Girl, if one I needs muſt meet,
Or in her Nuptial, or her Winding Sheet.

The Caſuiſtical-Poſt, *or* Athenian Mercury.

Queſt. *How many Times did Chriſt appear to his Diſciples afore his Reſurrection, or in the Forty Days following, before his Aſcenſion? I have had ſeveral warm Debates about it with a Perſon of great Piety and Learning, he affirming Twelve Times and I Eleven; ſo at laſt we agreed that* Dunton's Oracle *ſhould determine the Controverſy.*

Anſw. Chriſt's Appearances afore his Reſurrection were either the ſame Day it was done, or in the Forty Days following, before his Aſcenſion. The ſame Day we read that he appear'd Five Times. To *Mary Magdalen*, out of whom he had caſt Seven Devils, making ſo notorious a Convert the firſt Evangeliſt of his Reſurrection, *Mark* 16. 19. To her again, and the other *Mary*, admitting them to touch his Feet, and worſhip, and to carry News thereof to the Diſciples, *Mat.* 28. 9. Thirdly, to *Cleopas* and his Fellow, as they were going to *Emmaus*, inſtructing them firſt as a Stranger in this very Point, and afterward diſcovering himſelf in breaking of Bread, *Luke* 24. Fourthly, to *Cephas*, or *Peter* alone; and laſt of all, to all the Diſciples, (*Thomas* only wanting) where they were aſſembl'd together, the Doors being ſhut, ſhewing them his Hands, and his Side, for their greater Aſſurance that it was no Deluſion, and taking them ſo together, that if one would not truſt his own Eyes, he might be confirm'd by his Fellows, who ſaw it as well as himſelf, *Joh.* 20. 19. So ſpeedily, the very ſame Day, with ſuch Evidence, ſo often was the Article of the Reſurrection confirm'd. In the Forty Days after, we have Six of the like Appearances. To the Apoſtles (and *Thomas* being among them) Eight Days after, whoſe Doubting gave Occaſion for the farther Inſtruction of all, *Joh.* 20. 27. To *Peter* and Six more of the Diſciples, as they were fiſhing at the Sea of *Tiberias*, *Joh.* 21. 2. To *James*, (as ſome conjecture) for the ſtrengthening him againſt his Martyrdom, being the firſt of the Apoſtles that was to ſuffer, *Acts* 12. To the Eleven Diſciples upon a Mountain in *Galilee*, to make good that he had promis'd by the Women, *Mat.* 28. To more than Five Hundred Brethren at once, and to all thoſe laſt of all, that were preſent at his Aſcenſion, from the *Mount of Olives*, Acts 1. To which Eleven Apparitions, before his Aſcenſion, if we add that to St. *Paul*, *Acts* 9. it will make up the full Dozen, or Jury, to quit our Cauſe, and caſt Oppoſers. But if Apparitions ſhould ſeem to any too ſubject to Counterfeiting, we have a Cloud of Witneſſes beſides to confirm it. From Heaven, of Angels: *He is riſen, he is not here*, ſatisfy your own Eyes, *come ſee the Place where the Lord lay*, Mat. 28. From Women on Earth, who were unlike in ſuch a Caſe to vent a Falſhood, becauſe they ſcarce believ'd it themſelves. *They have taken away* (ſaith *Mary Magdalen*, who little thought of his riſing) *the Lord out of the Sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him*, Joh. 20. From the Diſciples, who had Eyes enough upon them, to trip them for failing in the leaſt Circumſtance: Whereupon they eſteem'd the firſt Relation of the Women as idle Tales, before Experience had taught them that the *Lord was riſen indeed, and had appear'd to Simon*, Luk. 24. 34. Theſe Things were ſo ſifted, ſo evident, ſo manifeſt on all Hands, beyond Exception, that Impudency it ſelf might ſtand amaz'd, not daring in any Sort to contradict it. It was made apparent to *Jews* and *Gentiles* of both Profeſſions, to Diſciples and Soldiers, Clergy and Laity, to Men and Women, both Sexes were ſatisfy'd, in the Evening and Morning, no Time excluded. In the Garden, upon the Way, in the City, at the Sea, upon a Mountain in *Galilee*, upon another overlooking *Jeruſalem*, within Door, without, no Place ever ſhun'd. They could not be deluded by hear-ſay, for their Eyes ſaw him; a Miſt was not caſt before their Eyes, for their Ears heard him. As near as might be he came to their Smelling, (if ſuch a Senſe were fit to diſcern in ſuch a Caſe) for he breath'd upon them, they beheld him eat and drink with them of ſuch Meat as was by Miracle provided for them, wherein Taſt might have his Portion in the Diſcovery. But more than all the reſt, he ſhew'd them his Hands and his Side, told them that a Spirit could not have Fleſh and Bones, as he had, wiſh'd them to handle him, caus'd *Thomas* to thruſt his Hand into the Wound in his Side, for his own, and the

fuller

fuller Satisfaction of them all. It was ſtrange therefore that Touching and Handling, the Senſe of Feeling, ſo often, ſo freely, by ſo many admitted, to make Experiment about its proper Object, ſhould in ſo main a Point be deluded. Out of all which Premiſes you ſee the Apoſtle's Concluſion, and the Ground of our Faith inferr'd in thoſe Words, *Now is Chriſt riſen from the dead.*

Q. *What's true Innocence and an inoffenſive Conſcience, a Thing much pretended to, but little known or practis'd?*

A. That Man is truly innocent, and has a Conſcience inoffenſive, that is always the ſame, pious in all Conditions, Places and Times. We are to be chaſt with *Joſeph* in the Palace, as well as the Priſon; within the Curtains of our Bed, as thoſe of the Tabernacle. To be ſober among the Vines, and temperate at a loaded Table; to pray for the King as heartily in our Cloſets as in his Chappel, and no more to curſe him in our Bed-chamber than we would in his own. To be true to every Truſt of the Dead, as of the Living, and not, as too many among us, who are ſo unlike to God, and ſo like the Devil, that they are moſt certainly falſe to all that put Confidence in them; whereas an inoffenſive Conſcience ſets God and Man before its Eyes, and is the ſame to thoſe that may be abſent, as toward him that cannot; and that in all Conditions, when he *hides his Face* as when he *ſhines on our Tabernacle.* Its Piety is not ſtrong only when we are weak, and then languiſhing when we recover: Is it not puff'd up by Proſperity, nor caſt down by Adverſity, as Boats that riſe with the Flood, and ſink with the Ebb? Its Mouth is not full of Murmuring when empty of Bread, but in all Eſtates hath *learn'd to be content.* Can tend on the Ark when its Manna is gone, and nothing left but the Rod, and the Law, when baniſh'd, as well as when it gratifies the Fleſh-hook: Can be devout at *Meſech* and *Kedar*, as in the Goings and ſolemn Proceſſion of the Sanctuary. Good *Barzillai* was as faithful a Subject to *David*, when hunted on the Mountains, as when he went to be crown'd at *Hebron.* A good Conſcience neither flatters the rich, nor oppreſſeth the poor; takes not the Opportunity of a Friend's Diſtreſs to inſult, or to betray; to ſtand aloof from the Sore, or only to pour Vinegar into it by ſharp Upbraidings, or uncharitable Concluſions; but where it cannot be a Shield to prevent a Wound, is ever ready with Balm to heal it; not trampling on a Proſtrate, whether Friend or Enemy, but is equally prompt to do Good, and to forgive Evil. *Pure and undefiled Religion* (the Religion of a Conſcience ſo qualify'd too) *viſits the Fatherleſs and the Widow*, with a Viſit like that of Chriſt, viſits to redeem, and as the ſame Chriſt too, keeps it ſelf unſpotted of the World. It throws no Dirt, (and 'tis hard to do it with clean Hands) nor doth any thrown at it ſtick on it, but is ſoon wip'd off by undiſturb'd Innocence.

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